**American Life in the 1980s**

American’s in the 1980’s had their mind set on one thing; money. The American people thought that money could buy happiness, so they made and spent a lot of it. One’s success during this time was based upon how much money you had, what car you drove, where you lived… you get the picture. A common term for people out to make money during this time was “yuppie” , which meant “young urban professional.”

Many middle-class Americans invested in the stock market and made a lot of money doing so.

There were many advances that changed the way the American people lived. Some of these include things like cable television, new types of music and the personal computer. Cable television was around in the 70’s but became something you would see in an average home in the 80’s. There was something for everybody, sports for the sports fanatics, cartoons for the baby boomer generation, late night sitcoms and you could even keep up on the local news. The characters in TV shows reflected the time, many characters lived in costly homes, wore expensive clothes and drove very nice cars. Some examples of these shows are “Dallas” and “Dynasty”. Some television programs offered an escape from serious issues like the shows “Happy Days” and “Three’s Company.” Talk shows started to become popular during this era, where they talked in public about things that were once considered very private.

MTV (Music Television) changed the way music would influence the world forever. It was made much easier for artists like Madonna and Michael Jackson to get their music out there and have an impact. A very popular song during the time was “Material Girl” by Madonna which reflected the morals of a very materialistic time period. Heavy metal was also very popular, they often sung about sex and drugs. Then there was the new form of music called “rap” in which words are spoken, rather than being spoken, over a heavy beat. At the movie theater, a very popular film was called “Wall Street” and it was about a young, wealthy, dishonest man who traded on the New York Stock Exchange and was successful.

The personal computer was introduced by Apple in 1977 and it allowed management of personal finances, quick word-processing and desktop publishing from the home, you could manage many things from just one small machine.

In the 80s, they revealed how dangerous and addicting many drugs that were being used in the 70s seemed to be. Around this time is when First Lady Reagan’s slogan “Just Say No” to drugs became very powerful and impactful. Still, newer and more dangerous drugs such as crack cocaine were added to the nation’s drug problem.

AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, was a huge problem during this time and was brought to many people’s attentions whereas not many people knew about it before. It was commonly communicated by sexual contact and the sharing of needles often used to inject illegal substances into one’s body through veins.

Some of the most popular foods of the time include jawbreakers, California raisins, cool ranch Doritos, tri-colored pasta salad, Orange Julius, Equal (sugar substitute), artificially flavored fruit snacks (such as gushers), Tab Cola, Lean cuisine and Crapri Sun.

Some of the most iconic and unique styles to the 1980s include shoulder pads, miniskirts, leg warmers, huge earrings, fingerless gloves, parachute pants, members only jackets, stretch stirrup pants and oversized tops.

Literature of the 1980s involves the work of African-Americans(Toni Morrison), Latinos(Oscar Hijuelos), Native Americans(Louise Erdich), Asian Americans (Maxine Hong Kington) and homosexual (Edmund Wilson) writers, who previously were often omitted or ignored in mainstream literature.

The 1980s were called the Reagan years, because he was president for eight of the ten years. During his first 4 years, the recession ended, inflation was controlled and he reduced taxes. Americans felt hopeful that they could make money and live up to the “American Dream”

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